

20.11.17

1 Senator K.L. Moore of the Minister for Treasury and Resources regarding letters to taxpayers requesting payment for the 2019 year of assessment (OQ.323/2020):

How many letters have been sent out to taxpayers requesting payment by 30th November for the 2019 year of assessment?

Deputy S.J. Pinel of St. Clement (The Minister for Treasury and Resources):

Revenue Jersey has been doing as required in 2020, as in previous years, by assessing people for income tax and issuing notices accordingly. These assessments detail amounts of outstanding taxation and due dates. Around 51,000 of the 2019 notices of assessment have been issued during 2020 and these will include standard wording which flags the payment deadline of 30th November. Other than these notices of assessment, the Comptroller of Revenue has assured me that no other letters have been sent out to prior year taxpayers requesting payment of their 2019 tax liability by 30th November. Following the Assembly's decision on 4th November, Revenue Jersey has now issued public notices, including 2 notices in the *J.E.P. (Jersey Evening Post)* on 10th and 12th November, advising individuals that payments do not need to be made and letters are currently being issued to all affected taxpayers.

4.1.1 Senator K.L. Moore:

Why, Minister, was there no mention of the possibility of the move to the current year basis when these notices were sent out after the debate was had by this Assembly and the decision taken?

Deputy S.J. Pinel:

For precisely the reasons the Senator has just mentioned, we had to have the debate and have it agreed before we could send out the notices. So all we have been doing to date is send out notices of assessment, which happens every year, and we have to do that by law which we could not change until such time as the approval of the move from P.Y.B. (prior year basis) to C.Y.B. (current year basis) happened.

Senator K.L. Moore:

Sorry, the Minister fails to understand my question, I think. The assessments were sent out after this Assembly took its decision and the question is why was there no mention of the move to current year basis in those notices that were sent out requesting payment?

Deputy S.J. Pinel:

As I said in my opening remarks, those notices are sent out by law and 51,000 of them have been sent out during 2020 for 2019 liabilities. They mention, I have had one myself so I know what it says: "The outstanding balance to be paid by 30th November" because that legally we had to do until such time as the Assembly agreed that the move from P.Y.B. to C.Y.B. could happen. Further notices to that effect, not the standard notices of assessment, are being sent out this week so everybody will get a letter saying they do not have to pay, apart from corporates, their 30th November payment on account bill. If they have already paid it, it will be accrued against their 2020 tax bill.

4.1.2 Deputy K.F. Morel:

Following complaints I have received from Islanders, I would like to ask if the Minister is aware that the Tax Department has been issuing fines to taxpayers for late payment even though those

taxpayers have not received their tax assessments? If she is aware, how many fines have been levied?

Deputy S.J. Pinel:

No, but if the fines have been levied, that is possibly on late payment of the May issuance. It will not be on the November one because that is not now demanded of people because of the P.Y.B. situation, so if it is late payment fines, then it could be on current year basis. I do not have access to people's personal tax situations but I am not aware that any fines that have been levied should not have been.

4.1.3 Deputy K.F. Morel:

Given that I have received complaints from Islanders about this, would the Minister undertake to go back to the Tax Department and confirm with them whether they have issued fines for late payments this year before tax assessments have been received by Islanders?

Deputy S.J. Pinel:

Yes, I will have an answer for the Deputy before the lunch break.

4.1.4 Senator K.L. Moore:

In the last sitting, the Minister admitted that the Department of Income Tax was struggling, what measures has she identified for improvement in Revenue Jersey and particularly with regard to regaining the confidence of the public in this service?

[10:15]

Deputy S.J. Pinel:

Revenue Jersey has had 2 years of big, big changes, as the Senator will know. There was the move from a 35 year-old computer system or I.T. (Information Technology) system to move that up to date, which has taken a lot of work on behalf of the staff but will become far easier to administer in the future, which is why it was done. We are trying to move towards independent taxation, which we want to do for 2022, which will be much easier based on this move from prior year basis to current year basis. As I have already mentioned to the Assembly that we will be coming back with the regulations for the Assembly to debate in end of January, February to agree for the end of March, so there is a lot going on in the Tax Department. From having a huge number of vacancies, because it is quite difficult to recruit people because of the finance industry, we now have only 4 remaining and so the whole pressure is being alleviated considerably by that.

Senator K.L. Moore:

I would ask the Minister to answer the question which was: what measures are in place and how will public confidence be regained and neither point has been addressed.

The Bailiff:

Were you intending to address by that answer those points, Minister?

Deputy S.J. Pinel:

I thought I had answered those points with my last remarks. There is also a Being Heard survey, which is for staff and customers, which is ongoing and there will be the results of that as well.